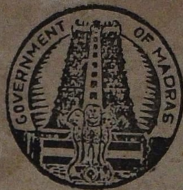


BULLETIN

OF THE

MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

EDITED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

BEGINNINGS OF THE TRADITIONS OF SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

BY

P. R. SRINIVASAN, M.A.,

Curator for Art and Archaeology, Madras Museum

New Series—*General Section, Vol. VII, No. 4*



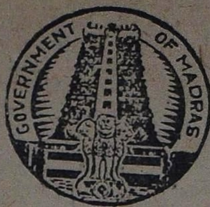
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Curator for Art and Archaeology, Government Museum, Madras.

Introductory

A typical temple of South India, belonging to the modern period[1] (i.e., after 1600 A.D. according to G. Jouveau Dubreuil's classification) consists of the following main parts. They are the *garbha-griha* (*sanctum sanctorum*) with but a small superstructure on it, more than one covered *prākāras* (corridors)[2] and *gopuras* (gateway towers)[3]. An important temple belonging to the Vijayanagar period (i.e., from *c.* 1350 A. D. to 1600 A. D.) while having almost all the parts mentioned above, shows only certain changes in their arrangement. The *gopuras* are high, the superstructure over sanctum is small and there are also a number of *prākāras*. Here the *prākāras*, instead of being covered, are open and in the open courtyards are seen a number of *maṇḍapas* (pillared halls) supported on high, heavy and ornate monolithic pillars[4]. This is the most significant difference between a temple of this period and temples of other periods. There are also other details such as floriated corbels over pillars which distinguish a temple of this period; and they are very helpful in a detailed study[5].

The period that just preceded the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire is usually designated as the later Chola Period and its duration was (again according to Dubreuil and for the sake of convenience of the study of temple architecture especially) two hundred and fifty years i.e., from 1100 A. D. to 1350 A. D. But in the second half of this period the power of the Cholas decreased due to various causes one of which was the pressure of the rising power of

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1. G. J. Dubreuil, *Archaeologie du sud de L'Inde*, Tome I, p. 56.
2. James Fergusson, *Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876), Fig. 201 of Ramesvaram temple corridor.
3. G. J. Dubreuil, *ibid.*, Pl. II, Fig. A; and Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, Vol. I, Pl. LXIV; both of the Minakshi-Sundaresvara temple, Madurai.
4. *E. g.*, the *Kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa* of Vellore (Dubreuil, *ibid.* Pl. XLIII. A; P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl LXII) and the Horse Court in the temple of S'ri Raṅgam (Dubreuil, *ibid.*, PL. XLV. and P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. LXI, Fig. 2.)
5. Dubreuil was the first to attempt successfully a study on these lines and his results hold good to this day.

the later Pāṇḍyas. In fact the Pāṇḍyas were almost supreme in South India in the 13th century A. D. They arranged to build more *prākāras* to those temples which had become famous due to their special sanctity.

The gateways of the *prākāras* were provided with towers which were short and stunted but broad and spacious. Examples of such towers may be found at Tiruvārūr [1] and Āvuḍaiyār-kovil, both in the Tanjore District, at Chidambaram [2] in the South Arcot District and at Śrī Raṅgam [3] in the Trichinopoly District. The temples of this period have comparatively fewer *maṇḍapas* in their courtyards. Apart from these special features, there was little or no difference between the unit of a temple of this period and that of a temple of the Vijayanagar period.

In the first half of the later Chola period, the Cholas still retained a semplance of supremacy over the whole of South India except perhaps Kerala, and temples belonging to this period have certain significant differences in their component parts from those of temples of the later Pāṇḍyan times. The *gopuras* are not tall and there are fewer *prākāras* .and *maṇḍapas.* The *maṇḍapas* of many of the temples were done in the form of a chariot. Examples of these are found at Chidambaram and Vṛiddhāchalam both in the South Arcot District, and at Tṛibhuvanam and Dārāsuram in the Tanjore District. Further, unlike in the case of temples of Tiruvārūr and Āvuḍaiyār-kovil, in the temples of this period the superstructure over the *garbha-gṛihas* are loftier than the *gopuras,* as for instance the Kampahares'vara temple [4] at Tṛibhuvanam and the Airāvates'vara temple at Dārāsuram[5]. These are similar to the typical *vimānas* of temples such as the Big Temple of Tanjore belonging to the early Chola period (850 A. D. to 1100 A. D.).

It is necessary to mention here that the temples of Kerala belonging to this period are distinguished by a variety of interesting characteristics. Chief amongst them is the plan. That is, in Kerala are met with circular temples with conical *śikharas* (e.g., the temple at Vaikom [6] and the Vaḍakkunnāthan temple at Trichur), square or rectangular temples with multiple-roofed superstructure [7] and temples apidal in form (e.g., the temple at Tṛiprangode [8]).

The early Chola period requires to be divided into two halves for our purpose. The second half is marked by the famous temples [9] at Tanjore and Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-cholapuram built by Rājarāja Chola I and Rājendra Chola I respectively. The unit of these temples may be seen to differ much from that of the temples dealt with above. It is apparent that in these temples the most marked structure is the skyscraping superstructure over the central shrine. The subsidiary structures such as the *maṇḍapas*, *prākāras* and *gopuras* are few and insignificant.

1. J. Fergusson, *ibid.*, Fig. 194.
2. Dubreuil, *ibid.*, Pl. XXXIV A.
3. J. Fergusson, *ibid.*, Fig. 195.
4. K A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas* (Revised edn. 1955) PL. X, Fig. 19.
5. *Ibid.*, Pl. VIII.
6. Stella Kramrisch in *Arts and Crafts of Travancore, PI. XV.*
7. *Ibid.*, Pl. XVIII.
8. P. R. Srinivasan, *Art and Architecture of Kerala* to be published in the *Journal of Indian History.*
9. P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. LVII and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *ibid.*, Pl. VI.

The temples belonging to the first half of the early Chola period are of the same order as those of the second half mentioned above. But in dimensions, these do not come anywhere near the latter ones. And an interesting thing about the temples of this period is that a good many of them are apsidal in form. The *prākāras* are small and simple, and the *gopuras* met with in them are quite insignificant. These characteristics are also met with in the temples belonging to the Pallava period (600 A. D. to 850 A. D.), but with the following difference. While no big temples, except perhaps the badly ruined Vijayālaya-choleśvara temple of Nārttāmalai [1] in the Pudukkottai area of the Trichinopoly District seem to have been erected in the first half of the early Chola period, during the Pallava period, especially in its later half, comparatively big temples [2] such as the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram, and the Kailāsanātha temple and Vaikunṭhapperumāḷ temple at Kāñchīpuram were erected. A number of temples in apsidal form were built during the Pallava period, e.g., the S'iva temple [3] at Tiruttaṇi. Unfortunately temples belonging to the earlier half of this period are few and even these are almost confined to the famous monolithic shrines, wrongly called Rathas, of Mahabalipuram [4]. These may be taken to represent the central shrines of the temple complex of later periods. It is notworthy that although these central shrines are simple and do not have any subsidiary structures, the group of five monolithic shrines at Mahabalipuram include shrines in three distrinct forms namely the *caturasra* (square), the *śālā* or *āyatāsra* (oblong) and the *gajapṛishṭha* (aspidal). While square and aspidal shrines continued to be built during subsequent periods, oblong ones became very rare. (The S'rī Raṅganāthasvāmi shrine [5] at S'riraṅgam in the Trichinopoly District, which is of the *vṛittāyata* (elongated circle) type is worth mentioning here as it is perhaps unique.) Interestingly the oblong form came to be reserved more or less exclusively for the *gopuras* of the temples in the subsequent periods as well as for the shrines of goddesses. This shows that at about the 7th century A. D. not only the unit of a temple but also the forms and plans of its various members were in the process of evolution and not yet finalised.

Large temples belonging to periods earlier than 7th century A. D. are not known and those that have come down are small shrines cut into rocks. If these are imagined to be standing in the open air they will be single-or three-celled shrines with a verandah or *maṇḍapa* in front. Having been cut into the rock there was no necessity to show their superstructures, although in some of the rock-cut excavations a domical vaulting is also cut above. Interesting examples of the latter category are reported from Kerala [6]. Hence there is difficulty in imagining their forms. Examples of rock-cut shrines date from about the 5th to the 7th century A. D., and the non-availability of materials proving the existence of structural temples of this period does not suggest that no such temples were built then. Probably quite a number of them, of brick and mortar, were built then. Of these at least one or two examples have survived. The famous apsidal temple at Chezārla [7] is one of them.

1. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *ibid.*, Pl. I.
2. P. Brown, *ibid.*, PL. LII. Fig. 3 and Pl. LIII.
3. Dubreuil, *Pallava Antiquities*, Vol. II, Pl. I, II and III.
4. P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. LI, Fig. 2.
5. Ram Raz, *Essay cn the Architecture of the Hindus*, Pl. XXIII and F.H. Gravely, *Outline of Indian Temple Architecture*, p. 7, n. 1.
6. Dubreuil, *Vedic Antiquities*, This subject has been recently dealt with in *Ancient India* No. 12 pp. 93 ff. Figs. 3, 4.
7. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Fig. 147.

Early Buddhist sculptures and their importance for this study.

Besides the various parts of a developed temple and their forms, each part has a variety of details. Taking the most important part of a temple unit namely the central shrine, its elevation has a number of horizontal sections such as the basement, the walls, the eves and the superstructure with its *śikhara* and *kalaśa*[1]. Each of these sections is further sub-divided into various parts and their development is easily seen in the temples belonging to periods after 600 A.D. Owing to the paucity of temples representing the periods before 600 A.D., it is difficult to trace back the development of these parts with confidence. However, there is a significant link which seems to fill up the gap in the story of South Indian temple architecture and takes it back to about 200 B.C. The link is supplied by the famous Buddhist sculptures from Amarāvatī, Jaggayyapeṭa, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Goli[2]. It is well known that the sculptures from these places include a number of bas-reliefs where a variety of examples of architecture, both secular and religious, occur. The types of religious shrines amongst them may without hesitation be taken to give us clues to the fact that there actually existed then shrines of similar types in the open air. Moreover the manner in which the various parts of a religious structure, particularly a shrine, was dealt with can be deduced from a study of these sculptural representations. In certain cases secular buildings shown in the bas-reliefs such as palaces may also be seen to possess some of the details of a religious edifice, a fact which shows that during the early period there was comparatively greater freedom in the practice of the art of building. We shall now see how the bas-relief representations help us understand the beginnings of South Indian temple architecture.

Plans of Shrines.

The spectacular effect of any building is produced by its superstructure the shape of which in many cases depends on the ground plan. So the first item to be taken up for consideration is the ground plan of shrines. Amongst the bas-reliefs there are representations of shrines built on oblong plan e.g., the *Puṇyaśālā* from Jaggayyapeṭa[3]; the *harmikās* surmounting the stupas and the *Bodhighāras* from Amarāvatī[4] are examples of shrines built on square plan and there are shrines built on circular plans[5]. Curiously shrines with apsidal plan are not met with in these bas-reliefs. But it is well known that almost all the *Chaitya-gṛihas*, rock-cut or structural, are apsidal in plan. A number of structural *Chaitya-gṛihas* have been found amongst the ruins of buildings of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa[6] especially. It is of great interest to note that the excavations that are carried out at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa have brought to light remains of a large apsidal structural

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1. Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture*, Fig. 17 A, 17 B.
2. Amarāvatī sculptures are dealt with by Messrs. J. Fergusson in *Tree and Serpent Worship*, J. Burgess in *Buddhist Sculptures from Amarāvatī etc.*, C. Sivaramamurti in *Amarāvatī Sculptures in the Madras Museum* and D. E. Barrett in *Amarāvatī Sculptures in the British Museum*.
   Jaggayyapeṭa sculptures are included in J. Burgess' book on Amarāvatī. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa sculptures have been studied by A. H. Longhurst and S. Paranavitana in *The Buddhist Antiquities from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*. Goli sculptures are dealt with by T. N. Ramachandran in *Buddhist Sculptures from a stupa near Goli*.
3. J. Burgess, *ibid.*, Pl. LV, Fig. 2; A. K. Coomaraswamy, *ibid.*, Fig. 142.
4. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XLII, Fig. 1e.
5. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *ibid.*, Fig. 145.
6. A. H. Longhurst, *ibid.*, Pl. IV (b), V (A), VI (a); T. N. Ramachandran, *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, 1938 (printed 1952), Pl. XII.

shrine devoted to Śiva who is called as Pushpabhadrasvāmi in the inscription occuring on its *dhvajastambha.* So, the absence of shrines in this plan among the bas-reliefs does not seem to have any significance. Thus in so far as the ground plan is concerned there are three basic plans namely the square (with its derivative oblong plan), the circular and the apsidal[1]. It is in these plans that temples were built in South India during subsequent periods. Here it may be mentioned that whereas temples in all these plans are known from Kerala and Tamilnad, in other parts of South India circular temples are not found. The reason for the omission of this plan by the *sthapatis* of the regions other than Kerala and Tamilnad is not known. It must be said here that especially in Kerala the ancient traditions of architecture were continued in their pristine form. Let us briefly advert here to the significance underlying each of these plans.

Sthaṇḍila (square) and Maṇḍala (circular) plans.

Of the three plans, the square and circular can be explained from a ritualistic point of view. The former is technically called *sthaṇḍila* and the latter *maṇḍala.* In every important ritual based on Vedic traditions these two are invariably used to denote the seats of two distinct categories of celestial beings. For instance, in the *Śrāddhas* i.e. the ceremonies connected with the worship of the *Pitṛis* or ancestors, two groups of invisible beings are invoked namely

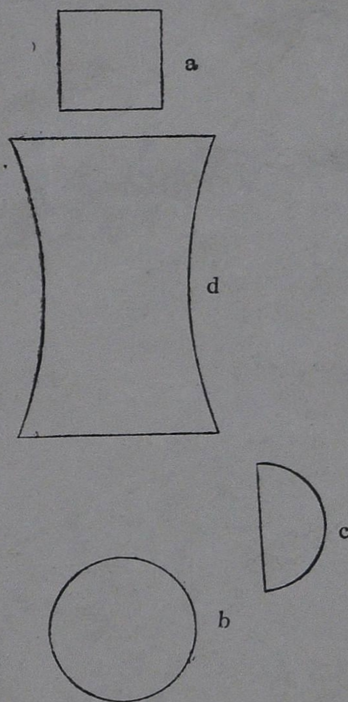


FIG. 1.

Vedic fire altars. a. Āhavaniya, b. Gārhapatya, c. Dakshiṇāgni, d. Vedikā.

1. Stella Kramrisch in her *Hindu Temple,* has dealt with this subject. There she says that only the square and the circle are important; but to us the semi-circle in its elongated form is equally important, although the latter two may ultimately be derived from the square.

the *Pitṛis* and the *Viśvedevas* (divine beings). When invoked they have to be provided with proper *āsanas* or seats. Here the seats are merely marked out on the floor and the *āsanas* for the *Pitṛis* is of the *maṇḍala* (circular) form and that for the *Viśvedevas* is of the *sthaṇḍila* (square) form. Even in the case of daily *pūjā* performed by householders for their *ishṭadevatā*, the circular form of *āsana* is marked for less important deities while the square *āsana* is reserved for the chief deity. Similarly only square altars of sand, paddy etc., are made for the purpose of all rituals. Coming to the Vedic sacrifices we know that they are performed with the help of three fire altars and a *vedika* (platform). The fire altars are called *Āhavanīya, Gārhapatya* and *Dakshiṇāgni* (Fig. 1).

They have square circular and semi-circular forms respectively. It is noteworthy that the *Gārhapatya* (domestic) altar is circular. The semi-circular form of the *Dakshiṇāgni* may be said to be the portotype for the apsidal plan. Thus, so far as the ground plans are concerned the later-day shrines may be said to have been based on the forms of these Vedic sacrificial altars or ritulalistic seats. It is worthwhile mentioning here the fact that only in South India, temples, in all these three plans are found in large numbers and, here too, in Kerala alone numerous temples in all the three or four plans exist side by side.

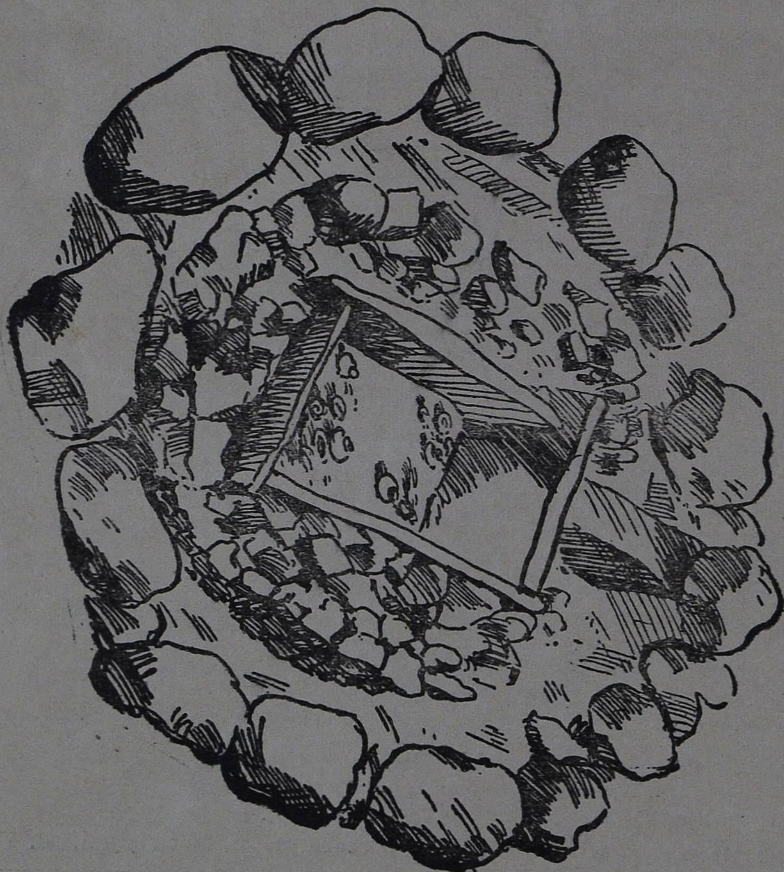


Fig. 2.
Megalithic stone circle from Brahmagiri.

Maṇḍala (circular) plan and its significance.

A word about the circular plan may be said here. In view of the fact that circular fire altar, at least in name, related to home and therefore indicated this-worldiness, it may be taken as a counterpart of the *maṇḍala* seat which is offered to the *Pitṛis* in a *Śrāddha*. When we look at the plans of the religious and ritualistic structures of the subsequent periods, it becomes clear that a majority of them which are funerary in character are circular on plan. The most noteworthy examples of this category are the megalithic stone-circles [1] (Fig. 2), and the stupas (Fig. 3) particularly of Buddhism. Association of funerary character with circular plans seems

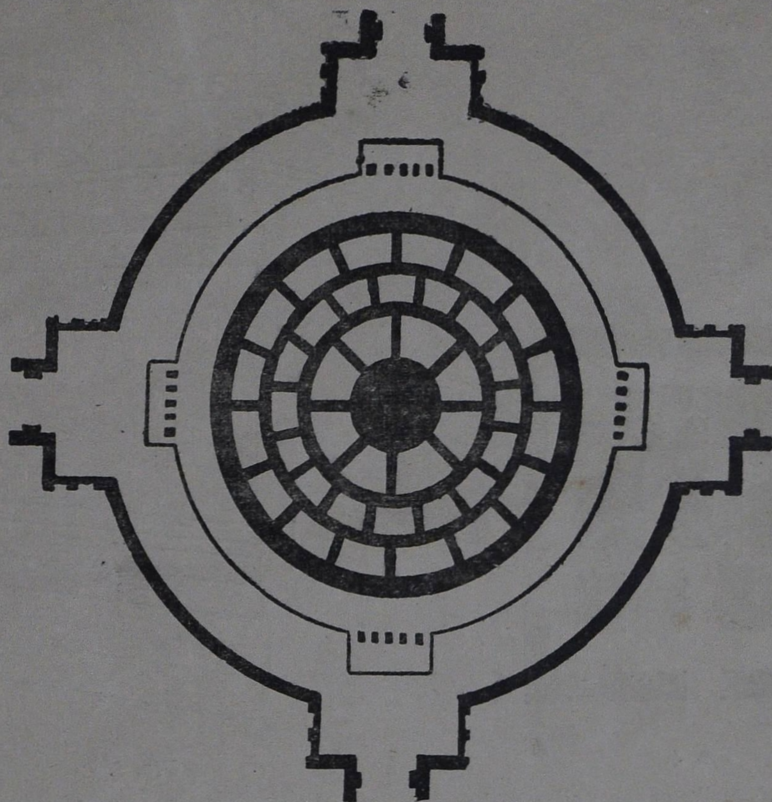


FIG. 3.
Plan of a stupa at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

to have faded out long before Buddhism became extinct and it was probably not considered at all, while building shrines, in some regions where Buddhism and other heterodox religions had little hold on the people. Thus it is, in the subsequent periods shrines on circular plan came to be built without the least association with them of any idea of funeral; and also shrines on square plans came to be built over the tombs of dead persons. Several examples of the former category are known from Kerala and Tamilnad and a number of instances of the latter group called *Paḷḷippaḍais* are known from Tamilnad.

1. A most recent study of megalithic monuments including stone circles of South India is by K. R. Srinivasan and N. R. Banerjee and is entitled *Survey of South Indian Magaliths*. See *Ancient India*, No. 9, pp. 103-15, and Pl. XXXVIII, and Pl. XLIV (B).

Sthaṇḍila (square) plan and its significance.

The square plan, being associated with the divine beings in the Vedic rituals, became sacred and shrines built on this plan (Fig. 4). and on the plans derived from it began to assume a special sanctity (Fig. 5). Hence such shrines in Buddhist context are seen to enclose

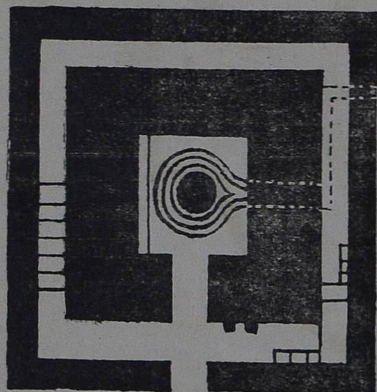


Fig. 4.
Plan of the *Garbhagṛiha* of the Kailāsanātha temple at Kañchipuram.

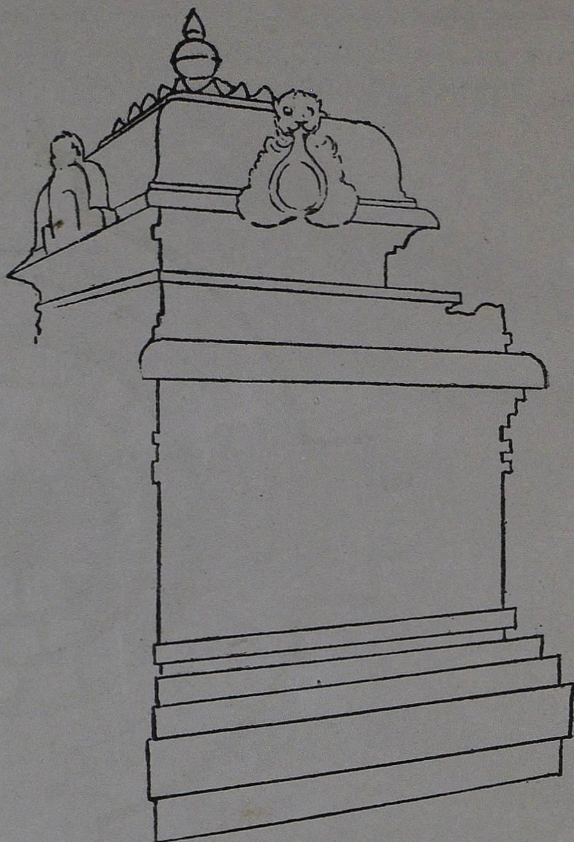


Fig. 5.
Elevation of S'iva temple at Korkai, Tirunelveli District.

Bodhi-tree [1] (e. g. the *Bodhighāra* from Amarāvatī) and *Buddha-pāda* [2] (e. g. the *Puṇyaśālā* from Jaggayyapeta). More important than these are the square *harmikās* which surmount the stupas. Although they are fences yet from the way they are shown on top of the stupas and from their function of enclosing sacred objects like the *Chatra-daṇḍa*, their distinctly sacred character is evident. An objection to the singling out of *harmikā* from its context and attributing to it a significance that should strictly go to an independent shrine may be anticipated. The reply to this objection is that during the period with which we are concerned here, the

1. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XLII, Fig 1e.
2. J. Burgess, *ibid.*, Pl. LV, Fig. 2.

temple complex was only in its beginnings and its various parts are therefore not met with in one and the same context but are found scattered in a variety of contexts. There is, therefore, no illogicality in recognising in the ***harmikā***, a shrine, the suffix ***ka*** being used to denote a diminutive *harmya*. A ***harmya***[1] means a structure with terraces and is used to denote shrines also. Thus a diminutive square shrine on top of a funerary monument naturally gets special significance.

Apsidal (chāpa-like) Plan.

There now remains the consideration of the apsidal plan. The *Dakshiṇāgni* altar is semi-circular and apsidal is almost similar to it, being only slightly elongate in its sides. This elongation may be purposeful. For, if the apsidal plan is analysed it is seen to be composed of a semi-circular and an oblong parts (Fig. 6). In other words it is a combination of elements of both the circular and the square forms. If this is so then the significance of this plan becomes self evident. Hence several shrines on this plan were built not only during the period under study but also in the subsequent periods as has been mentioned above ((Fig. 7). Almost every

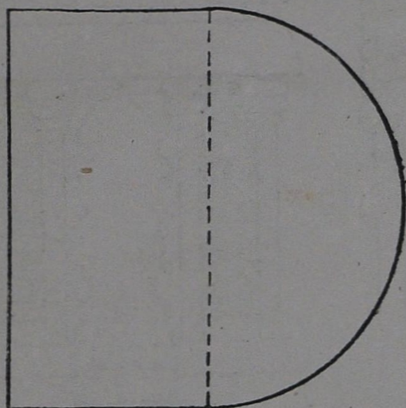


Fig. 6.

Apsidal plan.

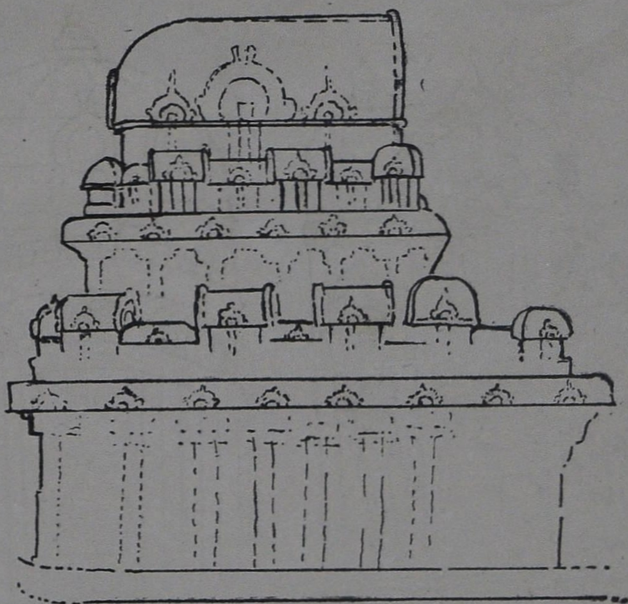


Fig. 7.

Elevation of the so-called Sahadeva Ratha at Mahabalipuram.

one of the Buddhist monasteries in the Andhradeśa contained a pair of apsidal shrines at their entrances. Besides, there were also a few separate apsidal shrines including the recently discovered Pushpabhadrasvāmi temple at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. The significance of this plan

1. P. K. Acharya, *Dictionary of Indian Architecture*, pp. 739 ff *s. v.*

seems to have been such that numerous temples on this plan came to be built all over South India till about 1100 A. D. or so. An interesting and significant fact about a majority of such temples is that they are said to enclose *mūlaberas* which are *svayambhūs*, i.e. self-existing (not man-made) in character.

So much about the plans. Now we shall examine the various stupas themselves which, being considered as temples by the Buddhists, should contain some of the details of architecture of subsequent periods. In fact the various parts of the stupas afford us valuable parallels indicating the beginnings of temple architecture.

Maṇḍapa character of the early shrines.

The aspect of architecture to be considered accordingly is the elevation of a shrine. Most of the shrines depicted in the bas-reliefs from the stupas of Āndhrades'a are more or less like small *maṇḍapas* (Figs. 8, 9, 10). These shrines, on elevation, show a basement with *vedika* decoration in some instances and with a *sopāna* (flight of steps) in front, a pillard middle

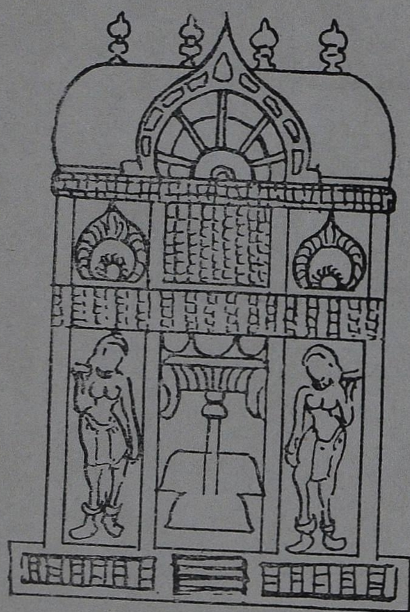


FIG. 8.

Puṇyas'ālā from Jaggayyapeṭa.

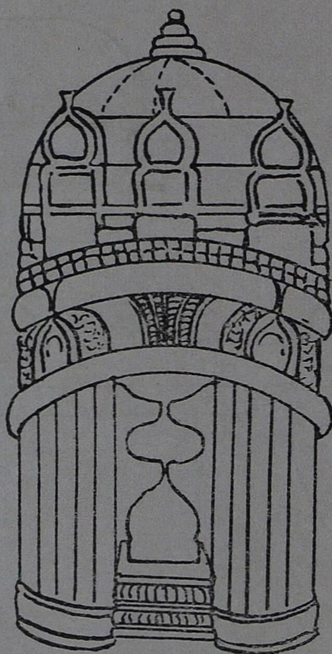


FIG. 9.

Shrine in a bas-relief from Amarāvati.

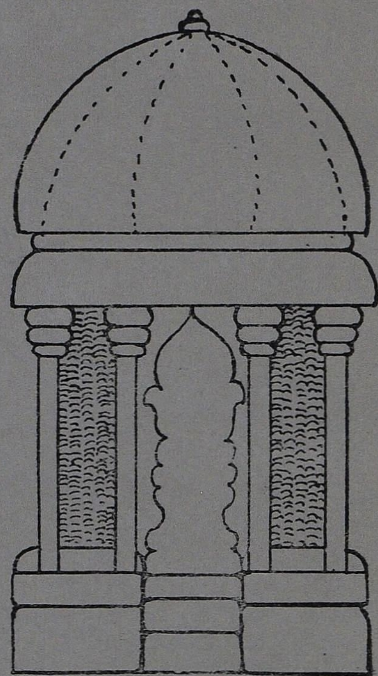


FIG. 10.

Shrine in a bas-relief from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

portion and superstructure of barrel-vaulted, domical or octagonal shape with a chaitya-window design on it. Above the superstructure are one or more *kalas'as*. In the centre of this *maṇḍapa*-shrine is the sacred object which, in the context of Buddhism, are the symbols of the Buddha such as the *Bodhi*-tree, the *Dharma-cakra*, the throne and a pair of *Buddha-pādas*. These

maṇḍapa-shrines, e.g. the Puṇyaśālā from Jaggayyapeṭa (Fig. 8), referred to already more than once, therefore show that in early times the shrines were unwalled and open. In fact if we consider the stupa itself as a sacred object, in many of the minature representations, it is not surrounded by a *vedika* (fence):; and even in such cases where a fence surrounds a stupa, it being composed of pillars and cross-bars, the stupa enclosed by it can be easily seen through its interstices. Such stupas may therefore be considered as a variety of *maṇḍapa*-shrines. The same is the case with the *harmikā*. A later-day example is the so-called Dharmarāja Ratha of Mahabalipuram (Fig. 11).

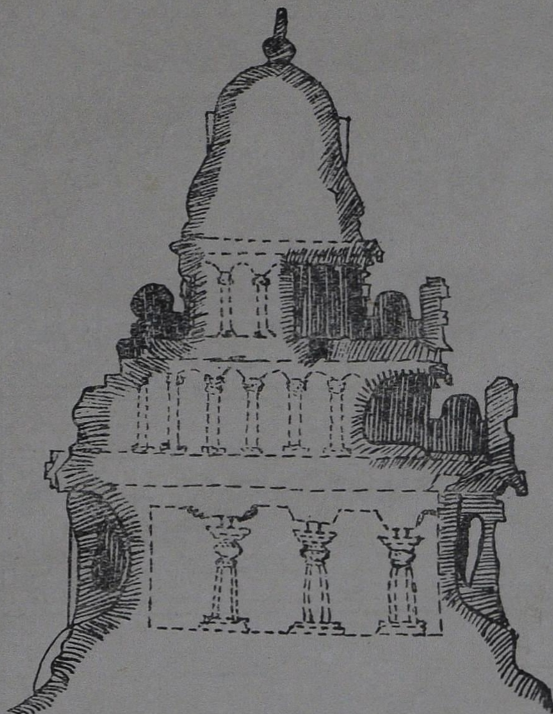


FIG. 11.

Vertical section of the so-called Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahabalipuram.

Yāḷa-vari and its earliest prototype.

The basement of a stupa does not show any mouldings. It, however, shows an interesting detail which has a significant bearing on the development of the mouldings of the basement in the later-day temples. It is the continuous series of friezes showing a variety of animals usually the Buddhist quartet namely lion, elephant horse and bull (Fig. 12) in different postures.[1]

1. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XVI, Fig. 4.



FIG. 12.
Animal frieze from Amarāvati.

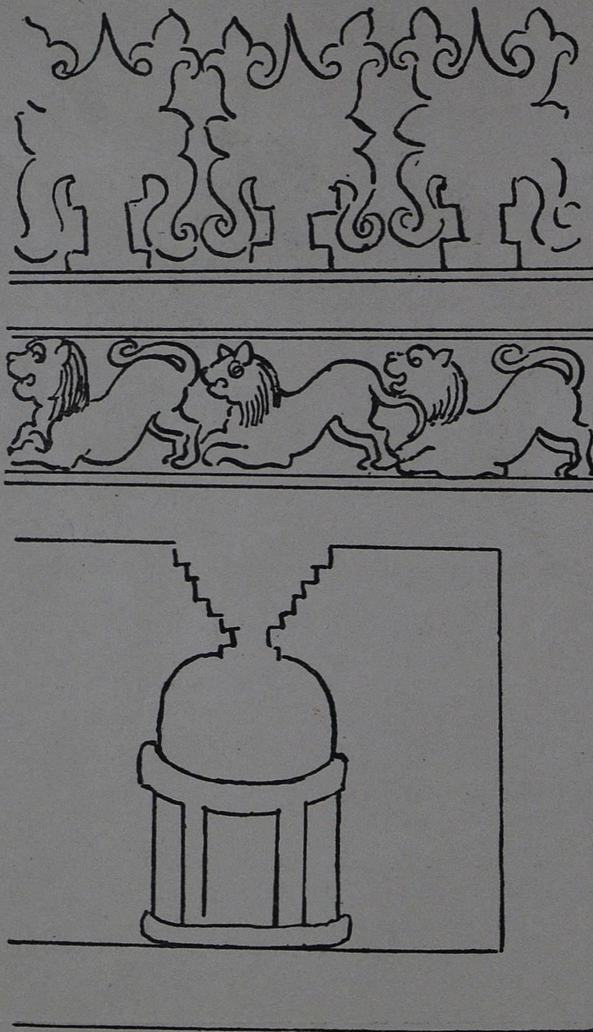


FIG. 13.
Frieze of running lions above stupa, from Amarāvati.

A similar series of animals depicted in a miniature form, are seen in the narrow rectangular friezes [1] from Amarāvātī which probably were employed as borders for the upper margin of the *medhi* (cylindrical base or drum). A frieze of running lions is also seen in the casing slabs which show the stupa-worship (Fig. 13). Here the frieze is seen above the stupa and further up is a series of *Triratna* symbol. [2] In a developed shrine belonging to later periods we see a frieze of animals forming part of the basement. The animals are both natural and fanciful. When the animals are only *yāḷīs* this frieze comes to be called as *yāḷa-vari* in Tamil. Another *yāḷa-vari* is also seen above the eves of such shrines. But in early examples it is composed of the above mentioned four animals. The temples belonging to the Pallava period show the animal frieze in a subdued from as in the so-called Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahabalipuram (Fig. 14). It is seen more clearly in a rock-cut shrine[3] at Mogalrājapuram (Fig. 15) in



Fig. 14.
Frieze of animals on the basement of the so-called Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahabalipuram.

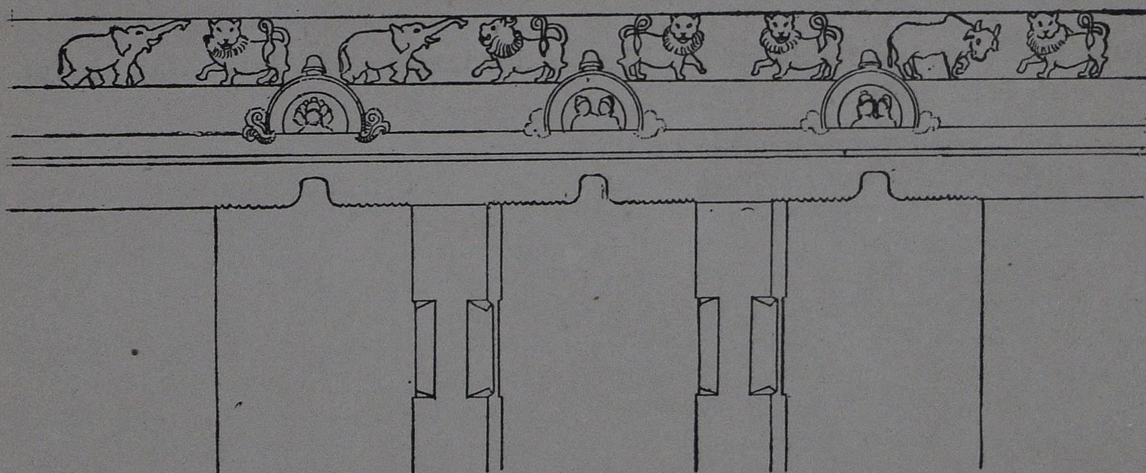


Fig. 15.
Animal frieze above cornice in the rock-cut shrine at Mogalrājapuram.

1. *Ibid.*, Pl. LIX, Fig. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, Pl. XXI, Fig. 2.
3. C. Sivaramamurti, *Early Eastern Chalukyan Sculpture*, Pl. III, Fig. b.

Āndhradeśa which approximately belongs to the Pallava period. In Tamilnad one of the earliest Chola temples to show this feature prominently, of which only the base remains, is the platform [1] at Nārttāmalai (Fig. 16) in the Pudukottai area of the Trichinopoly District, dated to about the third quarter of the 9th century A. D. In both these places the animals of the friezes are comparatively large, their relief is high and their workmanship is exquisite.

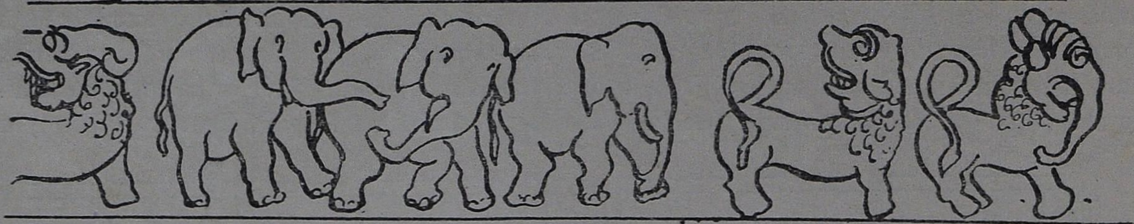


FIG. 16.

Frieze showing animals at Nārttāmalai.

Thus the beginnings of the *yāḷa-vari* motif of the fully developed Tamilian shrines can be traced back to the animal friezes of the early stupas. It must be noted here that interestingly this tradition is preserved only in Tamilnad. The temples of other parts of South India do not show this detail. The temples belonging to the Hoysala period, however, show this feature in a modified form[2]. Instead of a single frieze of the basement showing a variety of animals of a Tamilian temple, a Hoysala temple has a number of mouldings one over the other on its basement carved with animal procession, each moulding showing a series of one and the same animal in a variety of postures.

Stupa-slabs at the basis of the idea of decoration of a later-day shrine with its replicas.

Another detail of great significance that is met with in the stupas of South India is their casing slabs showing miniature stupa occupying the entire slab and a number of them were used to encase the brick core of the cylindrical base of the stupa (Fig. 17). A magnificent example of a casing slab has come down to us fortunately in an unmutilated condition [3]. The second variety has a smaller stupa which is worshipped by a few persons. Above the stupa are two horizontal courses of which the lower one has a frieze of running animals and the upper one has a series of *Triratna* symbols [4]. Slabs of this variety were used high up on the *aṇḍa*. Besides these, there is also a group of late friezes which show Buddhas and stupas alternately [5], Why did the *sthapatis* of those early times who seem to have been extraordinarily resourceful, resort to decorating a stupa with its own replicas? The reason probably is that they were dictated to

1. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *ibid.*, Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 86.
2. *Mysore Archaeological Report for* 1929, Pl. *I*.
3. J. Burgess, *ibid.*, Pl. I and C. Sivaramamurti, *Amarāvatī Sculptures*, Pl. LIX, Fig. 2.
4. This has been referred to above in connection with the discussion on the *yāḷa-vari* motif.
5. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, p. 267 (IV E6).

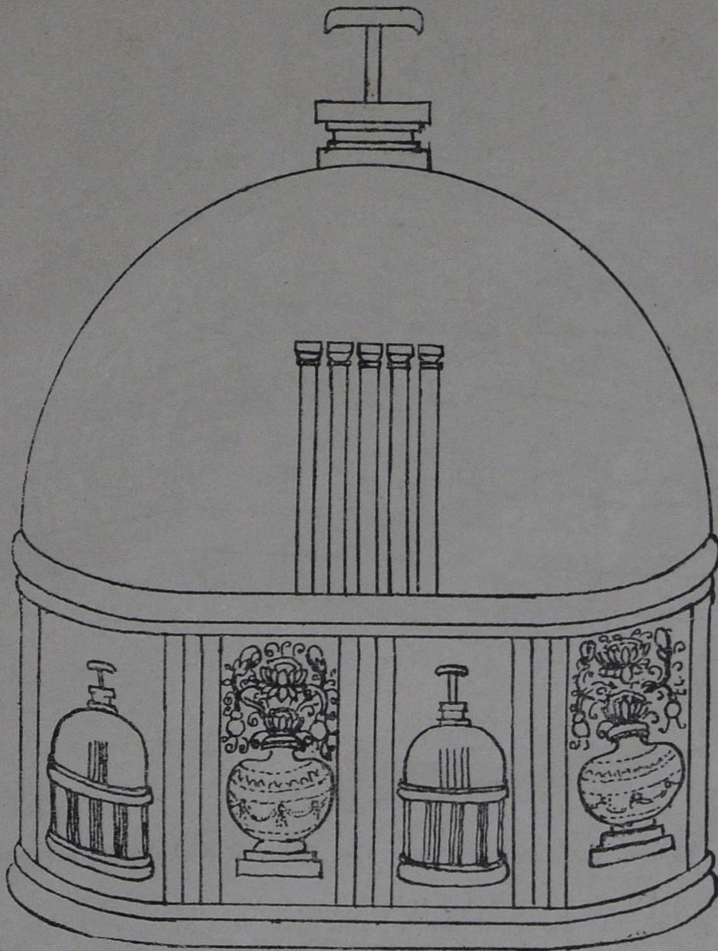


FIG. 17.

A casing slab.

do this by the teachers of the religion who wanted to impress upon the lay followers the sanctity of the stupa in worship, by repeating its form a myriad times. This tradition seems to have persisted through the ages down to recent times. For, in almost all the shrines or temples the central principle of decoration of their superstructures is to fill them up, tier after tier, with miniature representations of the shrine itself (Fig. 18). This characteristic is not however confined to South Indian temples alone. It is present in the various groups of temples [1] belonging to the so-called *nāgara* or the Indo-Aryan style of architecture, although of all the early

1. This is very easily recognised in the *vimānas* of the temples of Khajuraho (P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. LXXIX), in the temples of Mewar (*ibid.*, Pl. LXXXVI) and in the temples of the Hemadpanti group (*ibid.*, Pl. XCV). The temples of the Bhuvanes'var school show the repetition in tiers, the corners of each of them showing a prominent *āmalaka*. (N. K. Bose, *Canons of Orissan Architecture*, plate showing Gaṇḍi Mohini temple.)

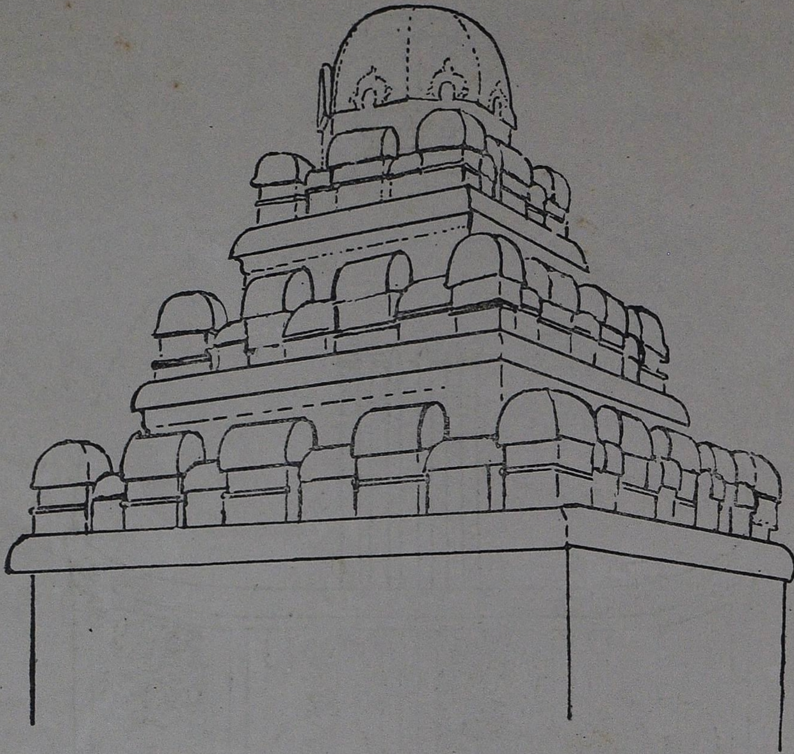


FIG. 18.

Tiers of the so-called Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahabalipuram.

Buddhits stupas it is only the stupas of South India that seem to have been decorated with such replicas. It incidentally proves the fact that this tradition was probably due to the *sthapatis* of South India. It must be noted here that while the so-called *nāgara* temples show stereotyped repetition of a single type of shrine, the examples of Tamilian (*Dravidian*) temple architecture show on their superstructure, miniature representations of three types of shrines namely the square (*kūṭas*), the oblong (*śālās*) and the apsidal (*gajapṛishṭhas*). Thus it is clear that the stupa slabs belonging to the stupas of South India are at the basis of this practice.

Pūrṇakumbhas and Kumbha-pañjaras.

Among the casing slabs from Amarāvatī and other places quite a few display large *pūrṇakumbhas* (full-vases) [1] of peculiar form (Fig. 19). From their mouths come out leaves and flowers resembling lotuses. The repetition of this motif too is interesting. Perhaps this is at the basis of the *kumbha-pañjara* motif (Fig. 20) which is met with in the later-day temple architecture. Interestingly this motif is not met with in the temples belonging to the early Pallava period, and is known to have been employed by the *sthapatis* belonging to the late

1. J. Burgess, *ibid.* PL. XLVLI, Fig. 2 and C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XXIII, Fig. 1.



Fig. 19.
Sketch of a Pūrṇakumbha from Amarāvatī.

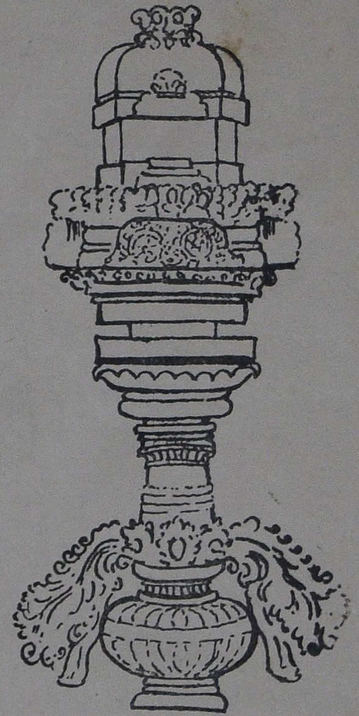


Fig. 20.
A *kumbhapañjara*

Pallava and subsequent periods. The reason for the absence of *Kumbha-pañjara* or even pillars with some sort of a *kumbha* design on it from the early temples is due to the fact that they probably continued the tradition of open *maṇḍapa*-shrine, in the earliest examples of which there was no wall to contain such a motif; nor was the motif carved on the pillars.

Beginnings of the Padma-kośa motif.

The next important detail that a stupa shows is the series of lotus petals which is seen just at the bottom of the miniature stupas. This seems to have been introduced only in the

stupa slabs (Fig. 21) belonging to a comparatively late phase of the school of Amarāvatī[1] and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. This innovation clearly indicates the fact that the *sthapatis* of this late phase were the first to give expression to the architectural idea of *padma-kośa* namely the idea of showing the most important part of a sacred structure as if emerging out of a full-blown lotus.

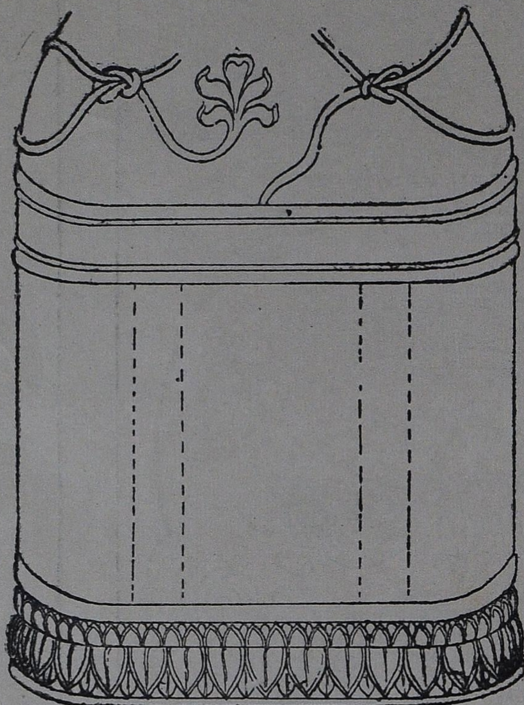


FIG. 21.

Sketch of the Rāmagrāma stupa showing the *padma-koṣa* motif, from Amarāvati.

In the temples belonging to later periods, it forms one of the important elements of the basement of the *garbha-gṛiha*. It is a noteworthy fact that again this feature (Fig. 22) seems to have been continued only from the late Pallava period, it being absent from temples belonging to the earlier period. Though the reason for this is not obvious, one thing becomes clear. As was noticed above in the case of several other motifs, the threads of traditions of architecture of the earliest historical period of South India somehow seem to have been continued in their pure form by the *sthapatis* of Tamilnad belonging to the periods after about 800 A.D., the *sthapatis* belonging to the intervening period having not used them in their works. This raises several interesting problems namely whether these *sthapatis* did not belong to the indigenous school of architecture; whether they abstained from using several architectural motifs of earliest historical times just because they were used in the religious contexts which they did not favour; or whether the *sthapatis* belonging to periods later than 800 A.D. were the true inheritors of the

1. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. LXI, Fig. 1, showing a representation of the Rāmagrāma stupa.

ancient traditions of art and so on. Further investigation is necessary to solve these problems. The fact remains that the *padma-kośa* motif too comes into vogue again after centuries.

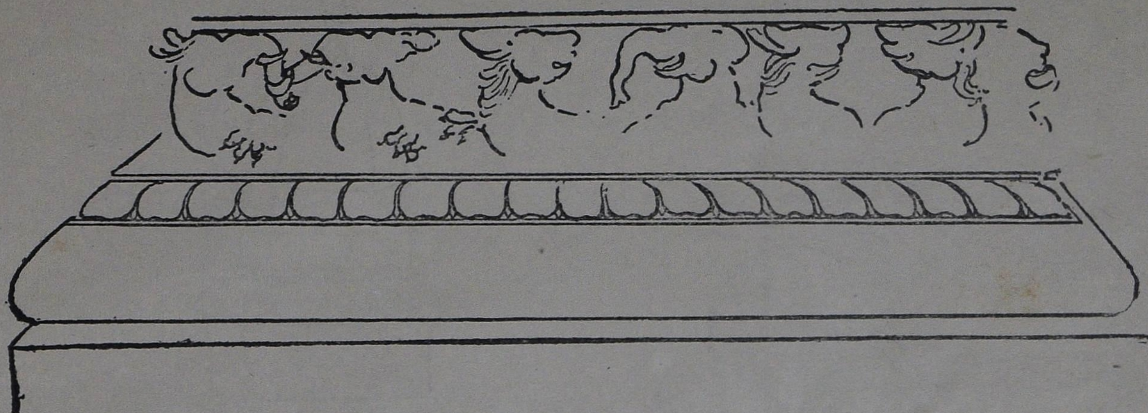


Fig. 22.
Padma-koṣa motif in the Koranganātha temple at Śrinivāsanallur.

Śikharas and their prototypes.

The manner in which the *śikharas* of the miniature shrines are done is quite interesting. Leaving out of consideration those with barrel-shaped *śikharas*, there is only one more type of shrine of which the *śikharas* come under our purview. It is the circular type. Some shrines of this type have globular (Figs. 23 and 24) *śikharas* [1] and others have octagonal *śikharas* (Fig. 25).

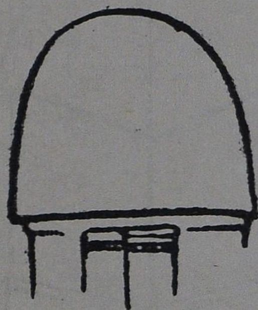


Fig. 23.
Globular *śikhara* of a miniature shrine from Amarāvati.

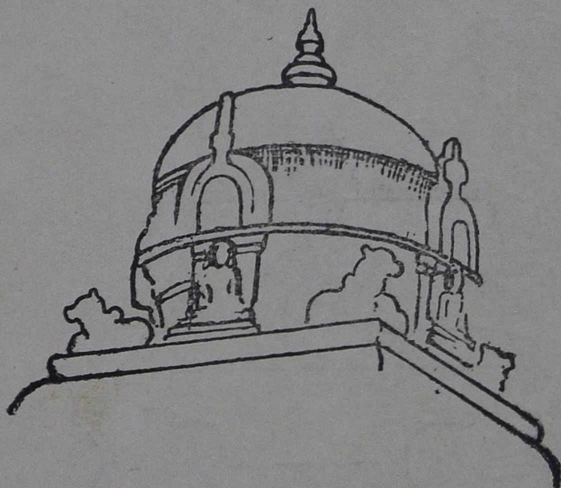


Fig. 24.
Globular *śikhara* of the Śiva temple at Melappaḷuvur.

1. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *ibid.*, Fig. 145

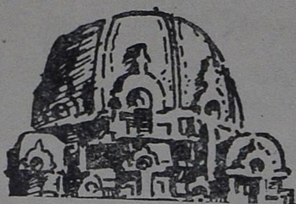


FIG. 25.
Octagonal *śikhara* of the Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahabalipuram.

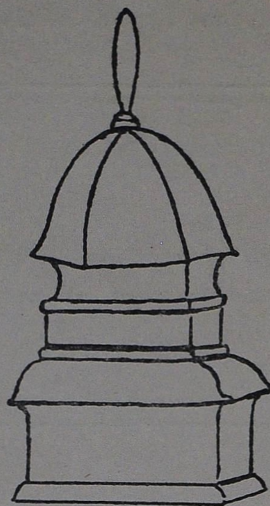


FIG. 26.
Octagonal *śikhara* at a corner of the terrace of a mansion, from Amarāvatī.

Some of the tall mansions have octagonal *śikharas* (Fig. 26) at the corners of their top-most terrace. It is interesting to note that shrines with square *śikharas* are not met with. However the later-day *śikharas* of globular and octagonal shape have had their beginnings in the periods to which these bas-reliefs belong. There are a good number of temples belonging to the Bādāmi

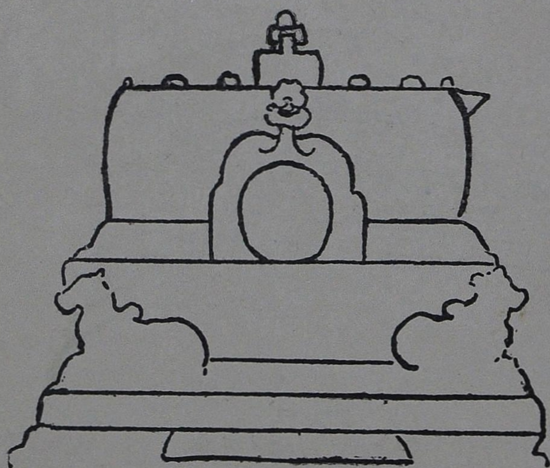


FIG. 27.
Square *śikhara* of a temple of Mūvar-kovil at Koḍumbāḷūr.

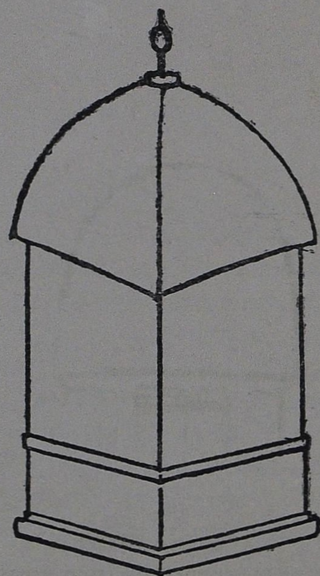


FIG. 28.
Square structure from Amarāvatī.

Chāḷukya and the early Chola periods which have square *śikharas* e.g. the Melegiṭṭi Śivālaya [1] at Bādāmi and the Mūvar-kovil [2] at Koḍumbāḷūr (Fig. 27). The beginnings of this variety of *śikhara* are therefore shrouded in mystery. It may however be connected with the square roofs of secular structures such as those found on either side of the gateway (Fig. 28) in the bas-relief representing the division of the relics of the Buddha from Amarāvatī to be referred to below (page 22).

Gopuras and their prototypes.

We shall now turn to the examination of one or two parts of the temple unit such as the gateway and the *maṇḍapa*. It has been mentioned above that the oblong plan and superstructure were nearly exclusively reserved for the gopuras of temples. This reservation seems to be based on ancient traditions as can be seen from this type of structure occurring in the bas-reliefs from Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Goli.

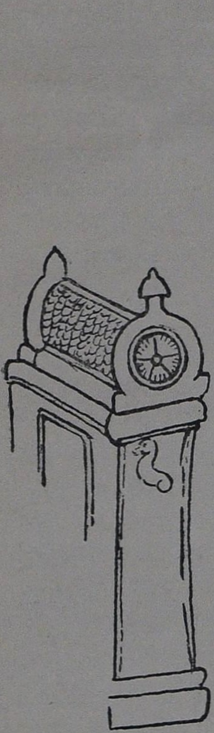


FIG. 29.
A barrel-vaulted gateway from Amarāvati.

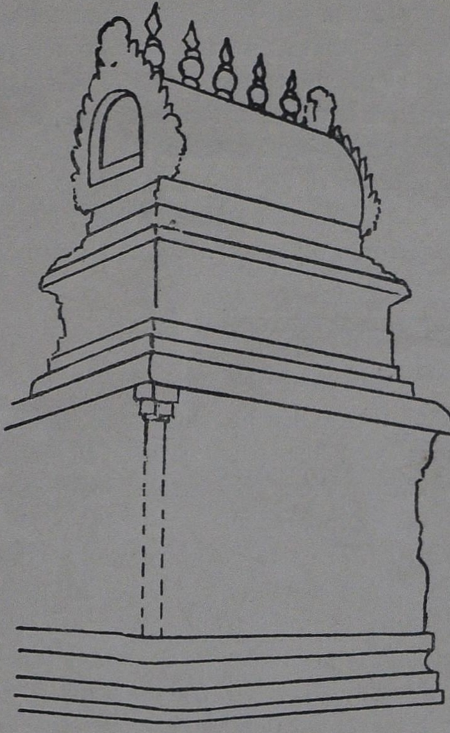


FIG. 30.
Barrel-vaulting of the entrance-shrine in the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñci.

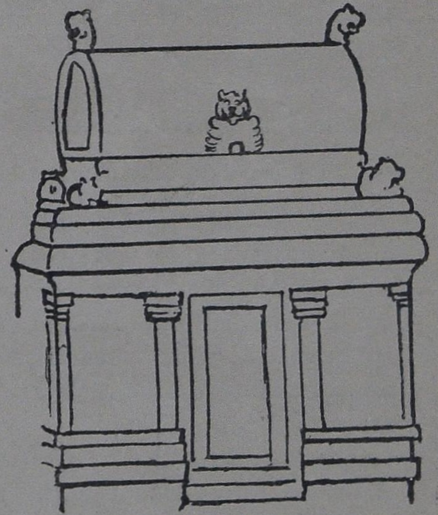


FIG. 31.
Gopura of temple at Laḍḍigam.

1. P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. II, Fig. 1.
2. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *ibid.*, Pl. IV, Fig. 7. He has also given illustrations of a number of small but early shrines with square *śikharas* occurring in various places, e.g. see Pl. II, Figs. 3, 4 and Pl. III, Figs. 5, 6.

It is well known that the gateways of South Indian stupas were not provided with such elaborate *toraṇas* as in the case of the stupas of Sāñchi. On the other hand here the gateways were shown guarded by seated lions on pillars. This is known not only from the big seated lions [1] that have come down to us but also from the representation of lions at the gateway represented on the stupa slabs [2]. *Toraṇas* of Sāñchi type are however, seen in a number of bas-reliefs where stupas and shrines figure prominently, and although they seem to be part and parcel with the stupa etc. they are shown at a distance. We are not concerned with these *toraṇas* here. What is interesting and important for our purpose here is the existence of another gateway of oblong shape with a barre-vaulted superstructure. It is simple and has no decorative details on it except for a *chaitya*-window design or two in some cases. Several examples of this type of gateway (Fig. 29) are seen in the bas-reliefs [3]. There is little doubt that this served as the superstructure of the gateways of one of the enclosures of the sacred precincts, the *toraṇa*-gateway being intended to demarcate another enclosure. Even secular buildings like palaces are sometimes shown with this double-gateway arrangement. Being hollow this superstructure may accommodate watchmen who should be stationed at a place considerably away from the city or the shrine proper so that as soon as they apprehended any harm to the city etc., they can alert the people. An excellent representation of this type of gateway is seen in the bas-relief from Amarāvatī showing the division of the relics of the Buddha [4]. Here the seven magnificent elephants each carrying on its head a casket containing a portion of the relics are shown emerging out of the massive gateway of the city of theMallas, which has barrel-vaulted superstructure There is no wonder, therefore, that this tradition (Figs. 30, 31) not only persisted in the subsequent periods but was also put into practice on a grand and uuprecedented scale.

Maṇḍapa (pillared-hall), a special contribution by South Indian Sthapatis.

It has been pointed out above that the miniature shrines of the bas-reliefs are simple pillared ones. During subsequent periods when the spaces between the pillars were covered by walls, these pillars became mere ornaments on them. Having enclosed the shrines with walls, the *sthapatis* of South India of those times probably felt a bit uneasy because there was no structure with pillars predominating in it. They therefore, gradually began to add a small *maṇḍapa* in front of those shrines. That these *sthapatis* had a special prediliction for pillars is evidenced by the use of pillars in the stupa complex itself. We mean the tall, slender and beautiful *āyaka*-pillars that are erected on the platforms of the *medhi* which face the gateways of a stupa. This detail is unique in the case of the South Indian stupas. A good many pillars of this category have been met with at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa [5]. Moreover this feature is exemplified amply by the stupa slabs that were used to encase the drum of stupas. The liking of the *sthapatis*

1. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. LVIII, Figs. 1 and 2.
2. *Ibid.*, Pl. LIX, Fig. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, Pl. LVII, Fig. 3; T. N. Ramachandran, *Buddhist Sculptures from a Stupa near Goli*, Pl. III, Fig. at the top and Pl. IV, bottom figure and A. H. Longhurst, *ibid.*, Pl. XXXV (b).
4. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XLIII, Fig. 1.
5. A. H. Longhurst, *ibid.*, Pl. XIII (a).

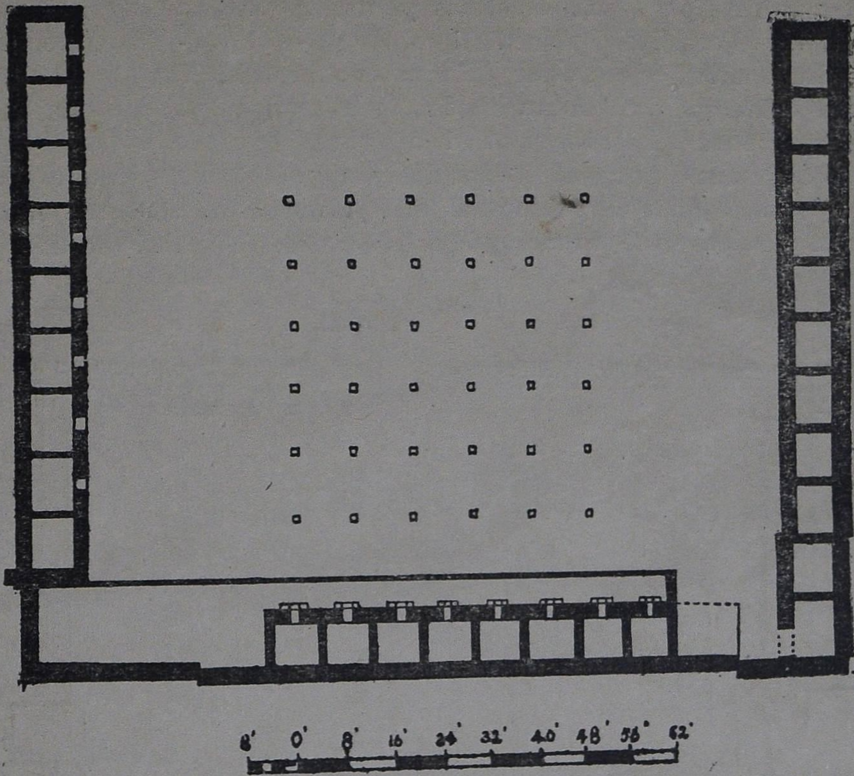


FIG. 32.
Pillared hall from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa

to have pillars and *maṇḍapas* (pillared halls) is also borne out by the ruins of large halls with rows of pillars (Fig. 32) found among the antiquities of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa [1]. Recent excavations at the place by the Department of Archaeology, Government of India, have uncovered the ruins of an almost fully developed temple complex. It is a temple to goddess Hārītī[2]. Besides the central shrine dedicated to the goddess and its adjacent shrines, this temple had also a long *maṇḍapa* of several pillars in front of the shrine. This temple is dated to about the 5th century A.D. It is well known that the temple architecture of South India of later periods is specially marked by *maṇḍapa*, some of 100-pillars and some of 1000-pillars (Fig. 33). The Hārītī temple *maṇḍapa*, and other *maṇḍapas* of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa may now be easily imagined to be the prototypes of the later-day *maṇḍapas*. It is, therefore, clear that the *maṇḍapa* building tradition goes back to very early times and is probably a special contribution of South Indian *sthapatis* to Indian architecture. It must, however, be mentioned here that halls with 1000 pillars (*sahasra-sthūṇas*) and 100 pillars (*śata sthūṇas*) are referred to in the Vedas. The *śālās* of various types mentioned in the late Vedic literature must have been also pillared ones. There are representations in the sculptures of Bhārhūt and Sāñchi of a few pillared structures. The

1. *Ibid.*, Pl. IV, (a) and VIII (a).
2. *Indian Archaeology, A Review*, 1954-55, pp. 22-23.

Mauryan palace at Pāṭalīputra had numerous pillars. Notwithstanding these, in later-day religious structures of North India, pillared halls of the 100-and 1000-pillar types, which distinguish South Indian temples, do not occur. Hence our statement. That the later-day ***sthapatis*** not only continued this tradition but continued it in as nearly a pristine form as possible is shown by the preservation at least one or two details of the decoration of the pillars of ancient times in the pillars produced by them. The original shape of the pillars seems to have persisted to some extent down the centuries. Almost all the pillars of the stupas of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa as well as those of the *maṇḍapas* of the latter place are for their greater part

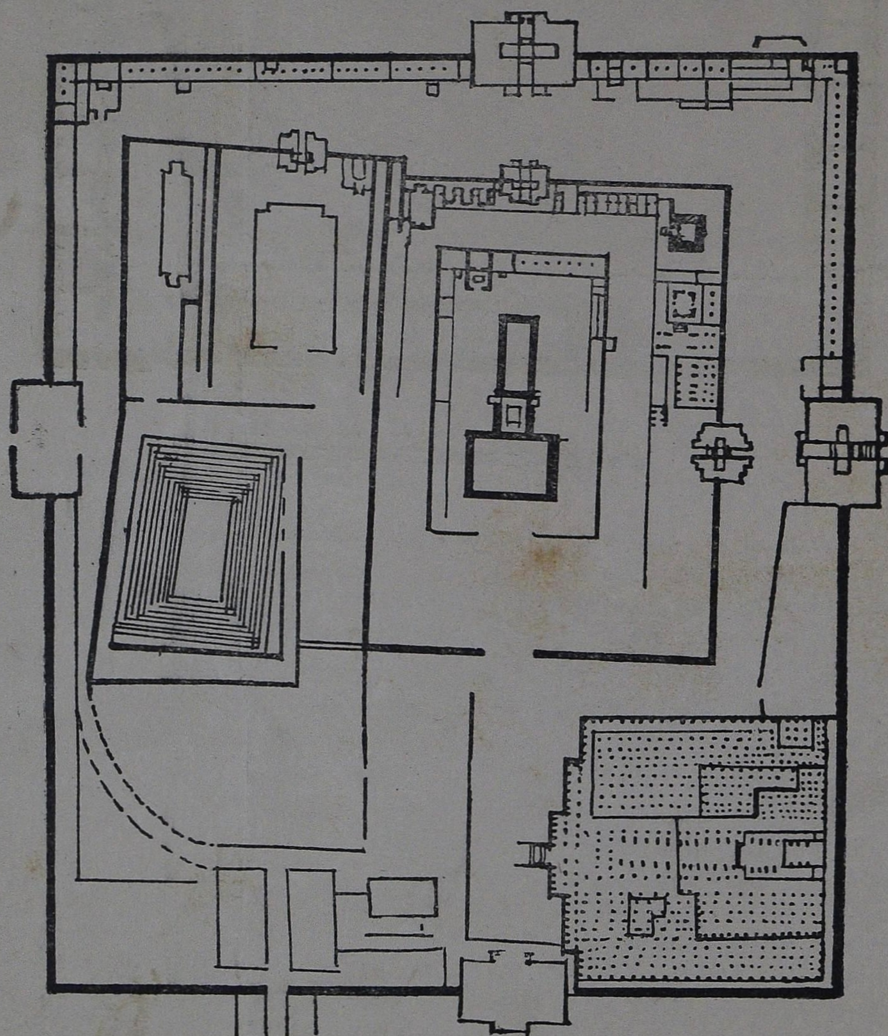


FIG. 33.

Ground plan of S'rī Mīnākshī temple at Madurai showing the 1000-pillared *maṇḍapa* at the bottom right corner.

octagonal in shape. So, when the *sthapatis* of later times were building *maṇḍapas*, they continued to carve the pillars with eight sides. Sometimes they are shown partly octagonal and partly square as e.g. the pillars of the rock-cut caves belonging to the time of Mahendravarman I Pallava.[1] Even here, it must be noted that the octagonal part is in the middle of the pillar. Sometimes the pillars may have sixteen or thirty-two facets. Here it may be remembered that these are but multiples of eight only, and the use of such multip'es if not in the pillar facets, in other equally important objects such as the spokes of the *Dharmacakra* by the Buddhists, is well known. Thus there is no doubt that in South India even in minutae of details the traditions of architecture, for that matter those of every walk of life, were continued unchanged or with but little change.

Origin of the dhvajastambha.

It seems certain that every gateway of the stupas of Āndhradeśa had on either side a beautiful free-standing column. Each one of the columns is topped by one of the characteristic emblems of Buddhism such as the *cakra* and the *stupa*. This feature is specially characteristic of the miniature *stupas* (Fig. 34) from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[2] Providing free standing columns in front of sacred edifices is an ancient practice evidences for which are met with not only in India but also in some other countries of the world such as Egypt which had a glorious past. Amongst the Indian examples of such columns may be mentioned the lion pillar erected during the time of Asoka near the southern side of the stupa No. 1. of Sāñchi[3], the Heliodorus Garuḍa pillar of Besnagar[4] and the rock-hewn lion pillar in front of the rock-cut *chaitya*-hall of Karle[5]. There was here another pillar opposite to this, which has been broken. In 1957 excavations at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Department of Archaeology of Government of India has struck the ruins of a remarkable group of shrines in an enclosure. From an inscription it is known that the shrines were intended for the god Shaṇmukha[6]. The concept itself is unique and the erection of pillars in front of them like the Heliodorus column mentioned above, is particularly interesting as it unmistakably shows the continuance of the tradition through centuries. From the above passage it will be seen that there were two distinct schools of tradition in the matter of providing pillars near the gateways of sacred buildings. One of them favoured the erection of two pillars, one on each side of the entrance of a temple and the other favoured the erection of a single pillar in front it. The occurrence of two pillars in front of the Kailāsanātha (Fig. 35) temple[7] at Ellora, a Hindu shrine and the single Asokan pillar near the Buddhist stupa at Sāñchi precludes the idea that these two traditions are sectarian in character. Nevertheless it must be mentioned here that except for the singular instance of a Hindu temple namely the Ellora Kailāsanātha temple, in no other ancient or modern shrine do we find

1. A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, Vol. I, Pl. I, and II.
2. A. H. Longhurst, *Buddhist Antiquities from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, Pl. XI (c).
3. J. H. Marshall, *Monuments of Sāñchī*, Vol. I, p. 25; Vol.II, Pl. IV, VII.
4. P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. VIII.
5. *Ibid.*, Pl. XV.
6. Information kindly given by T. N. Ràmachandran, Joint Director General of Archaeology in India. See *Indian Archaeology, A Review, 1956-57*, pp. 36-37.
7. P. Brown, *ibid.*, Pl. LXXXVIII (A).

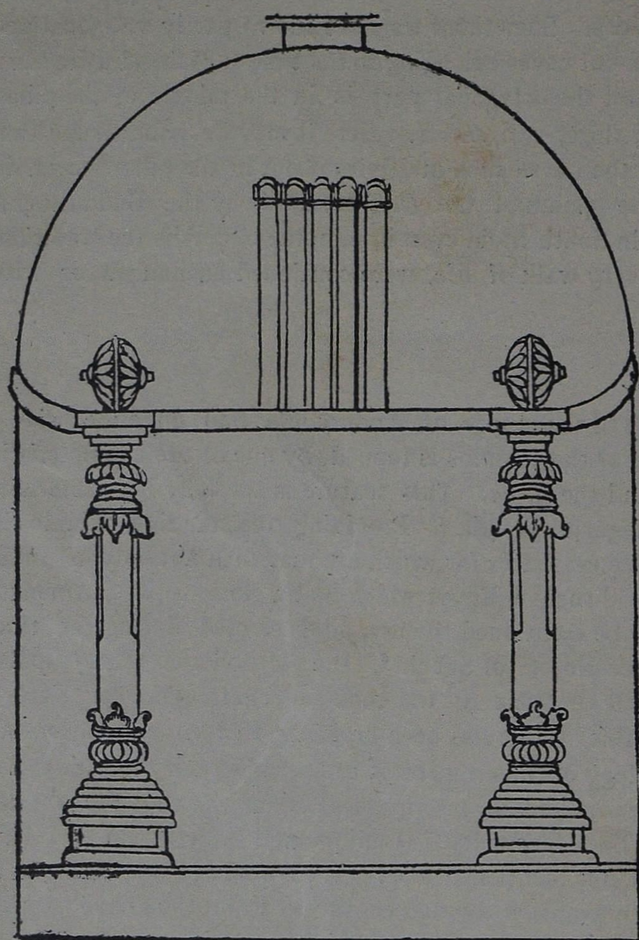


FIG. 34.
Stupa-slab with a pillar on either side from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

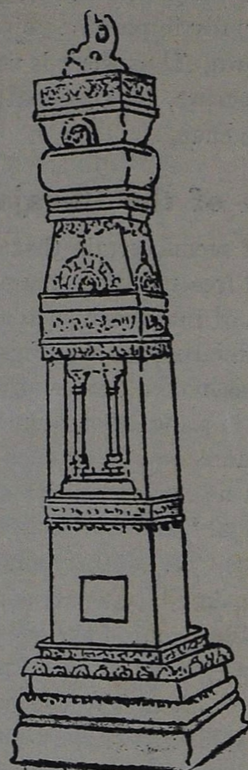


FIG. 35
One of the two pillars flanking the Kailāsa temple at Ellora.

two pillars. On the contrary the Besnagar Garuḍa column, the recently discovered columns in front of the shrines dedicated to Shaṇmukha at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and the single *dhvajastambha* occurring in all the Hindu temples belonging to subsequent periods, prove that the single *dhvajastambha* tradition is very ancient. It is therefore apparent that the history of one of the important members of the later-day temple unit namely the *dhvajastambha* goes back to very early times. Here it is necessary to state that while pillars seen in the bas-reliefs from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa carry each a Buddhist emblem, the *dhvajastambhas* of later periods carry the sectarian symbols such as Garuḍa in Vishṇu temples and Nandi if the temple is to Śiva.

Nandi in front of Śiva temples and the evolution of this idea.

In the later-day temples we find *balipīṭha* (seat for placing offerings on) before the *dhvajastambha* and a representation of the vehicle of the god to whom the shrine is dedicated

before the *bali-pīṭha* all the three being placed on the axial line which commences from the *liṅga*. These are not seen in the miniature shrines represented in the bas-relief or in the stupa complex; nor do the shrines dedicated Shaṇmukha and the temple to Hārītī from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa referred to above show any details similar to this. However, a singular evidence has come to our notice, which remarkably suggests that there were shrines with at least one of these two elements occurring in the appropriate place. It is a lead coin of the Śātavāhana dynasty. Its legends have unfortunately been obiliterated due to weathering. But from the traces of a few letters of the legend on the reverse still left, the coin seems to belong to the time of Yajña S'rī of the last quarter of the second century A.D.[1] A great majority of the coins of this dynasty show arched *chaityas* on the observe and Ujjain and other symbols on the reverse. This coin shows on the reverse a beautiful design of a bow-and-arrow. But it is the obverse design that is interesting and unique (Fig. 36). It shows a three-stepped pedestal on which is placed a figure resembling a human head. It carries a three-pronged design. Interestingly

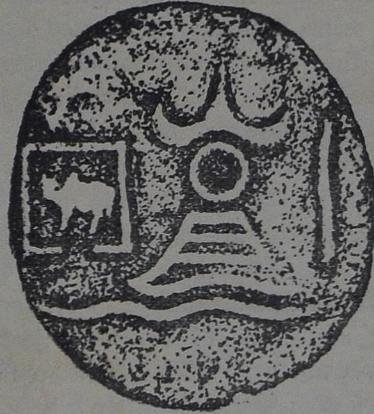


FIG. 36.
A Śiva shrine on a coin of a Śātavāhana king,

the pattern of it is almost similar to the trident borne on the head by the Śiva-Paśupati figure from Mohenjō-daro. To the proper left of this head is a tall pillar. To the proper right is a square, with a small opening at its bottom, suggesting an enclosure. Within the enclosure is depicted a tiny little but beautiful bull standing facing proper right. This bull is of the type which occurs in early sculptures from Amarāvatī etc., as well as of the type met with in the seals of copper-plate grants of Śālaṅkāyanas[2]. All these figures as well as their arrangement appear to us to suggest clearly that what is meant here is a shrine with the minimum number of members of its unit. The trident of the head and the bull on the left show that here the deity represented is Śiva. Though this theme occurs in a coin, it leaves no doubt about the fact

1. Dr. M. Rama Rao of the Osmania University, kindly read the legend for me.
2. Bulls resembling this, sometimes in an enclosure also, are found in the coins of S'ātakarṇi I, as obverse symbol, See *J. N. S. I.* Vol. XIV, where Prof. Mirashi has published two such coins. Dr. M. Rama Rao told me that there are four coins of this type in the collection of the Hyderabad Museum. I thank him for this information.

that during, and earlier than the second century A.D., there existed Śiva shrines of this type. In fact references to Śiva shrines are met with in the *Saptaśatī* of Hala who is said to be a member of the S'ātavāhana dynasty and who ruled in the first century A.D. What is of great interest for our study here is the bull, besides the pillar which appearently stands for a *dhvajastambha*. This shows that the practice of showing the image of the vehile of the deity along with the *dhvajastambha* is an ancient one. As has been said above, in the later-day temples this was standardised and all the three elements namely vehicle, the *balipīṭha* and the *stambha* are shown in a file. But from this coin we know that at the time to which it belonged not only there was no trace of a *balipīṭha* but there was no such standardisation in the arrangement of the remaining two elements. Their arrangement, as seen in the coin, therefore, shows the beginnings of the tradition which became standardised much later. The interesting thing about the bull is that it stands facing away from the deity within the enclosure. In the later-day Śiva temples the bull invariably faces the deity and is shown couchant on a pedestal.

Here it should be mentioned that though the beginnings of these details go back to very early times their standardisation seems to have been effected again only from the late Pallava or early Chola period. For, in the rock-cut shrines belonging to Pallava Mahendravarma I's time there is no provision for these details. If the monolithic shrines of Mahabalipuram are taken to belong to the time of Narasimhavarman I, here too we do not see these details in a fully standardised form. Even here, no provision seems to have been made for a *dhvajstambha*. If the seated bull, the standing lion and elephant that are found there are taken to represent the vehicles of the deities for whom the shrines are intended even then their postures and positions show that the *sthapatis* did not as yet think in terms of showing them in front of the shrines. One of the rock-cut caves at Bhairavakoṇḍa in Āndhradeśa which is of a comparatively early date, a bull is also carved out of the rock [1] just in front of the shrine, but the *dhvajastambha* and the *ballpīṭha* are absent. However, in so far as the *nandi* is concerned, this seems to be one of the very early instances where it is shown in the posture and position in which the *nandis* appear in the Śiva shrines of later periods. That even during the time of Pallava Narasimhavarman II alias Rājasimha this group did not get completely standardised is proved by the fact that in the Kailāsanātha temple of Kāñchīpuram the *nandi*, though it faces the shrine, is far away from it. This tradition seems to have persisted for a long time because the case is similar with the *nandis* of the Bṛihadīsvara temples at Tanjore and Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram. In a number of temples of South India which, although their present structures are comparatively late, have a hoary tradition, the uncertain arrangement of the images of the vehicles shows the persistence of ancient traditions although every one of such cases is explained away by an interesting story. As instances, the Śiva temple at Tirumullaivāyil near Madras and that at Tiruppuṅgūr may be cited. In the former place the *nandi*, though couchant on a pedestal and is in its proper place according to the standardised scheme, it is shown with its back side towards the *liṅga* in the shrine. Apparently this seems to be one of the few examples which perpetuates the tradition found in the S'ātavāhana coin we examined above. But at this place this phenomenon is explained by the story that the *nandi* was ordered by Śiva to go to the help of his devotee, Toṇḍaimān, the king of Kāñchīpuram, and the posture of *nandi* suggests

1. A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, Vol. I, Pl. XX.

his departure from his station. At Tiruppuṅgūr, the *nandi* faces the *liṅga* in the shrine all right, but it is not actually in line with it as it ought to be. Its non-alignment is also explained by a story. The Pariah saint of Śaivism called Nandanār, when he visited this place could not have *darśan* of the *liṅga* because the *nandi* was obstructing the view of the *liṅga*. So he implored the Lord to show him His form. Having been moved by the devotee's sincere yearning, the Lord ordered the *nandi* to move little away from the line so as to enable Nandanār to have His *darśan*. Whatever may be the truth in this story, the fact remains that somehow even to this day the ancient tradition of not showing *nandi* in a standardised alignment is seen to continue here. It may be mentioned here that although all along we have been dealing with Śaivite shrines, the conclusions arrived at in regard to their architectural features are applicable to the shrines of Vaishṇavism and other sects as well.

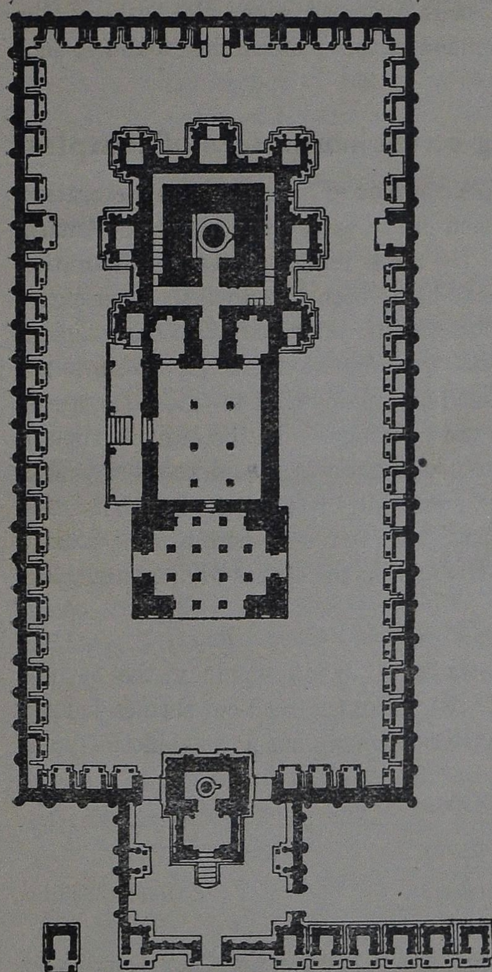


FIG. 37.

Ground plan of the Kailāsanātha temple of Kāñci showing the *prākāra* lined with small shrines.

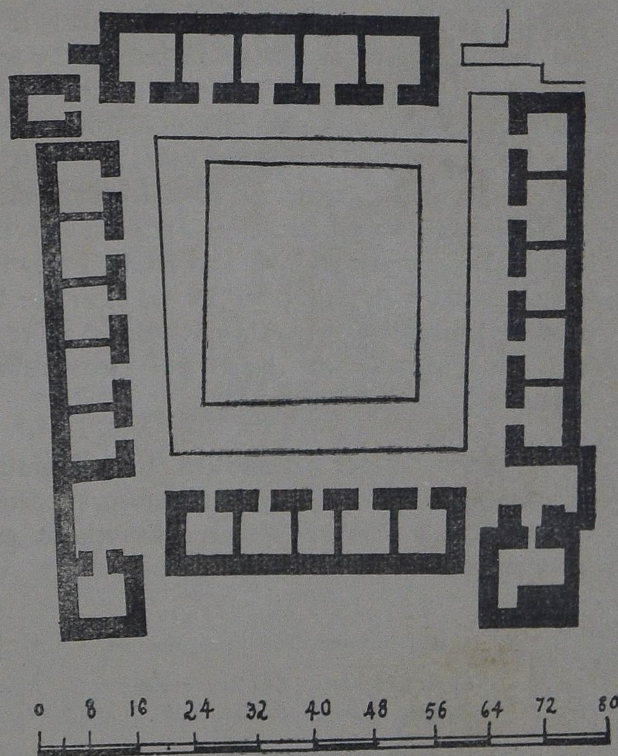


FIG. 38.

Ground plan of a monastery from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

Plan of a monastery at the basis of later-day prākāras lined with cells.

The representations of shrines in the bas-reliefs from Amarāvatī and other places, do not show any compound wall (*prākāra*) but the grand Buddhist temple namely the stupa was as a rule provided with a fencing which clearly shows that the practice of enclosing a sacred edifice has been in vogue from very early times. But this fencing being almost open trellis-like work, the *prākāras* of solid walls of later-day temples cannot be traced to it although the principle underlying both is the same. In the case of a number of later temples the *prākāras* are lined in the inside with a series of small cells intended for subsidiary shrines as for instance the *prākāra* of the Kailāsanātha (Fig. 37) temple[1] of Kāñchīpuram. Does this type also have its beginnings in the architecture of the earliest historical period? We believe that it has for its prototype the form of the monasteries (Fig. 38) especially of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[2] A monastery has a big open courtyard in the centre with monks' cells arranged along the walls of the enclosure.[3] It may be mentioned that this plan is common to the monasteries found at such places as Taxila also.

Sculptures of the stupas and their bearing on the sculptures of temples.

Just as in the case of the plan and units of temple complex in regard to the decoration also the traditions of ancient times, particularly those seen in the early sculptures from Amarāvatī and other places have persisted through the ages. The most important item of decoration of a religious structure, as met with in the stupas, seems to have been to embellish their entire outer surface with sculptures in relief illustrating various stories connected with the religion. This is a speciality of early stupas of South India. This tradition seems to have continued unabated in the subsequent periods. It may be mentioned in passing that in the early stupas of North India two varieties of this mode of decoration were in vogue. In the famous stupa of Sāñchi the decorative sculptures are confined only to the *toraṇa* gateways, and no other part of it was covered with sculptures. On the other hand the remaining parts of the Bhārhūt stupa show that the carving was extended over the entire fencing; but even here there is no indication that the stupa proper was encased with carved slabs as is found in the stupas of Jaggayyapeṭa, Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

Continuing our examination, we find that this tradition was in vogue in the earliest religious structures belonging to the subsequent periods. We mean the rock-cut shrines belonging to Mahendravarman I's time. His rock-cut cave at Trichinopoly has a magnificient panel of sculpture showing the Gaṅgāvataraṇa scene.[4]

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1. A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, Vol. III, Pl. VI (c).
2. A. H. Longhurst, *Buddhist antiquities of Nāgārjnnakoṇḍa*, Pl. V; and T. N. Ramachandran, *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* 1938 (1952), Pl. II and XIX.
3. In South India this plan for houses has continued te be popular till modern times, and is remarkably exemplified by the houses of old towns and by the houses of Nāṭṭukkoṭṭai Nagarattars, especially.
4. A. H. Longhrust, *Pallava Architecture*. Vol. I, first plate which has no number.

It may be said that this sculpture occupies only a portion of the shrine and it cannot therefore be said to be a proper example. The reply to this objection is that there are several other caves such as the lower cave at Trichinopoly itself, the Mahishamardanī and Varāha caves[1] at Mahabalipuram and the caves of Bādāmi,[2] Ellora[3] and Elephanta where the sculptures cover nearly the whole of the available wall space. The practice of decorating the outer sides of the walls of shrines is best illustrated by the monolithic shrines[4] at Mahabalipuram. Among such sculptures occurring in the so-called Arjuna-Ratha, are groups of couples probably of the royal class carved in the niches on either side of the central niche where is depicted an aspect of Lord Śiva. The male figures of those groups are seen to point towards the central niche. This difinitely reminds one of the couples or groups depicted on either side of the miniature stupas etc. of the casing slabs from Amarāvatī[5] and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[6]

More telling examples of this practice are the sculptures of the Kailāsanātha[7] temple. It is not only a magnificent temple but also a repesitory of beautiful and vigorous sculptures. The entire outer surface of the main shrine and the niches lining the inside of the *prākāra* is carved with scenes of Śiva's sports. In fact the temple is an epitome of Śiva Purāṇa in stone. The differences between this and the stupas of early periods lie only in the subject matter and the size. The Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram was also covered with such sculptures but unfortunately they have all weathered due to the action of sea-wind. The Vaikuṇṭha-perumāḷ temple at Kāñchīpuram belonging to a slightly later period is another example illustrating this tradition.[8] During still later periods this practice underwent slight modifications. In the temples belonging to the early Chola period icons began to occupy the niches on the walls. But the *sthapatis* of those temples who were heir to the legacy of the wonderful traditions, still remembered them and made use of them in insignificant places. Thus came into existence the miniature panels with scintillating sculptures illustrating scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa, the Bhāgavata and the Devī Bhāgavata, occurring in such famous temples as the Nāgśevara[9] at Kumbhakoṇam and the Vīraṭṭaṇeśvara[10] at Kaṇḍiyūr near Tanjore. In the Big temples at Tanjore and Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-cholapuram the space on either side of niches on the walls of the sanctum is covered with sculptures which narrate the story where the aspect of the Lord, of which an image is shown in the niches, is very important. As instances of this is the Caṇḍeśā-nugrahamūrti and Kāmāntaka sculptures[11] from Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-cholapuram. The early practice

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1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Pl. XXI.
2. R. D. Banerji, *Bas-reliefs of Bādāmi*, Memoirs of the Archaeological survey of India No. 25.
3. J. Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, Pl. LXXV.
4. A. H. Longhurst, *Pallaaa Architectnre*, Vol. II, Pl. X to XIV.
5. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. XXI Figs. 2. 1, 2.
6. A. H. Longhurst, *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, Pl. XI (c).
7. A. Rea, *Pallava Architecture*, Pls. XXVIII—XXX, etc.
8. C. Minakshi, *Historical Sculptures of the Vaihunthap-perumāḷ Temple, Kāñchī*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India No. 63.
9. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas* (1955), Pl. XXXIV, Figs. 92-94.
10. P. R. Srinivasan, *Rare Sculptures of the Chola period* in *Laḷit-Kalā* No. 5.
11. P. R. Srinivasan. *Description of Plates* in *The Coḷas* by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Figs. 57 and 58 respectively.

of depicting narrative sculptures was also in vogue during the Vijayanagar period as exemplified by some sculptures at Hampi[1] and other places.

Prototypes of Dvārapālakas.

Besides the above, the tradition of providing *dvārapālakas* for the temples may also be traced to the early sculptures from the Kṛishṇā valley. The most interesting are the figures of

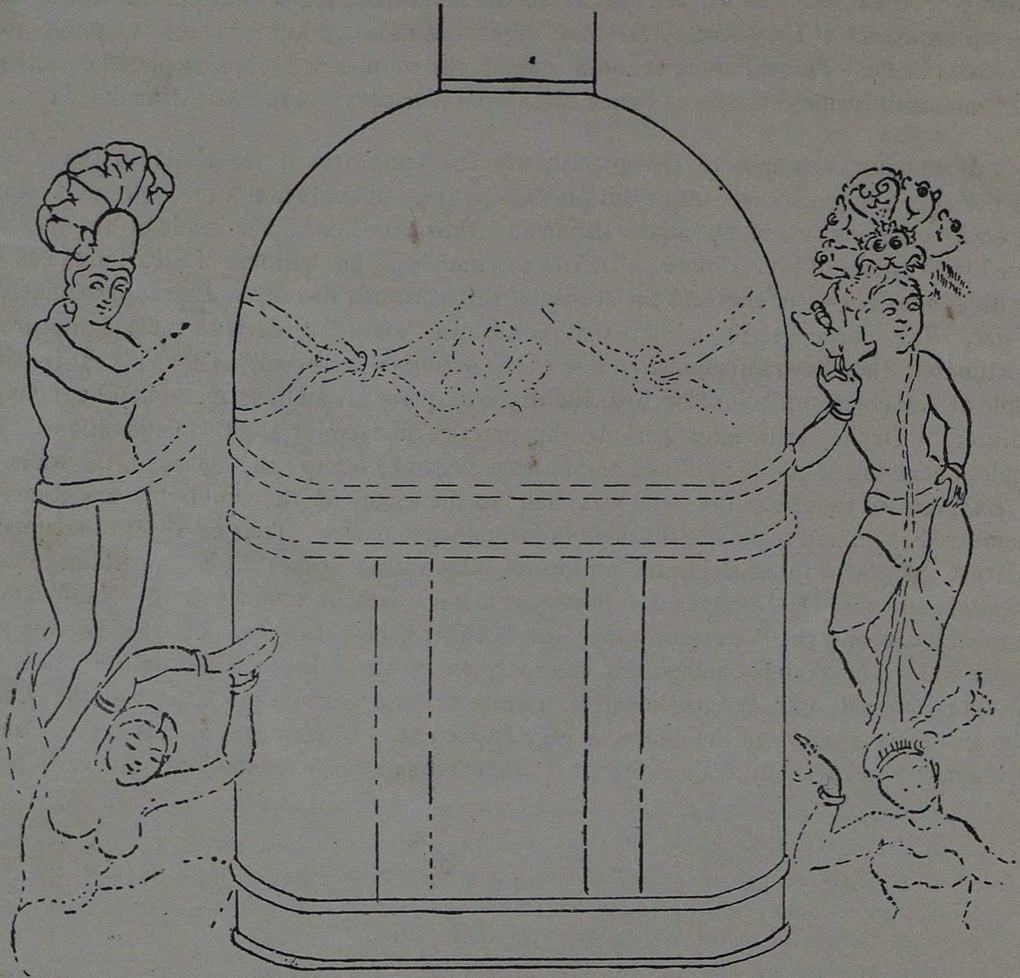


Fig. 39.
Sketch of the Rāmagrāma stupa from Amarāvatī.

Nāgarājas (Fig. 39) seen guarding the Rāmagrāma stupa[2] sculptured in a casing slab from Amarāvatī. Of course this is one of the very late pieces; but it is nevertheless much older than

1. A. H. Longhurst, *Hampi Ruins*, Fig. 29.
2. C. Sivaramamurti, *ibid.*, Pl. LXI, Fig. 1.

the oldest rock-cut shrines belonging to subsequent periods where we meet with the regular *dvārapālakas* for the first time. Nāgarājas in similar contexts are also known from Nāgarjunakoṇḍa and in somewhat similar contexts from Goli.[1] Among the later-day *dvārapālakas*, there are two classes one possessing a pair of horns and the other without them. An early example of the former group which is interesting for our study here is known from the Mogalrājapuram (Fig. 40) caves[2] in the Krishna District and a number of them belonging to



Fig. 40.

Horned *dvārapālaka* in the rock-cut cave at Mogalrājapuram.



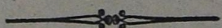
Fig. 41.

Horned *dvārapālaka* in the Vijayālaya-choles'vara temple at Nārttāmalai.

1. T, N. Ramachandran, *Sculptures from Goli*, Pl. I (a) and IV (j).
2. A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, Vol. I, Pl. VIII (b).

somewhat a later date are seen in the rock-cut caves at Tirumayyam near Pudukkottai and Kunṟakkuḍi near Kāraikuḍi. Similar *dvārapālakas* are also seen in the Vijayālayā-cholesvara temple[1] at Nārttāmalai near Pudukkottai, belonging to the 9th century (Fig. 41). A beautiful example of this type datable to the 10th century A. D. is on show in the Art Gallery at Tanjore. The significance of the presence of the horns in these *dvārapālakas* has been explained with reference to the practice of wearing horns by such primitive tribes as the Nāgas and the Goṇḍs. But to us it appears to have been due to the continuance of the motif of Nāgarāja as *dvārapālaka* dealt with above. If we remove the middle three hoods out of the five snake-hoods from these Nāgarājas they will look exactly like the horned *dvārapālakas* of later times.

The foregoing discussion shows us the beginnings of the various elements of South Indian temple architecture. In the earliest known historical period they do not seem to have formed a unified pattern as they did in later times. So, it was necessary for us to trace the beginnings of a few of the various elements that formed the temple unit of later periods, in a variety of structures occurring amongst the antiquities from Amarāvatī and other places. The developed stage in which the various elements of architecture are met with in the antiquities unmistakably proves the fact that they had years of vogue before. How far these traditions can be pushed back is only a matter of conjecture which we do not want to indulge in. However the evidence of the *Puṇyaśālā* from Jaggayyapeṭa which may be said to date from about the 2nd century B.C. gives a lower limit of date for the existence of these traditions.



1. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas* (1955), Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 84.